Pipeline is our hypocrisy

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Ottawa gives green light to pipeline expansion, June 19

The Liberal government approved this major pipeline project the day after declaring a climate emergency. There will doubtless be plenty of coverage focusing on hypocrisy, which will likely cost the Liberals in the election.

Other than embarrassing scheduling, though, is this anything new? It seems like the kind of climate policy promised in 2015. We picked this government to represent us, and frankly it does. This hypocrisy is Canada's hypocrisy. We want to have our environmentally friendly cake and eat it with oilsand ice cream. We care a whole lot about climate change but not enough to pay $2 a week to fight it, according to a recent poll.

It's not that the instinct is wrong, economic growth versus aggressive climate action is a spurious choice. Massive investment and labour would be required to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis.

Surely it is possible to have both, but this isn't what it looks like, making public statements on climate while continuing with business as usual. We're going to have to change the way we live, and we need a government courageous enough to lead us.

Jack Morton, Toronto

The Trans Mountain expansion, approved by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his federal Liberal cabinet, requires that the tank farm on the side of steep Burnaby Mountain be doubled in size to store 5.5 million barrels of highly flammable and explosive gasoline, diesel, sour dilbit containing H2S (hydrogen sulphide - instantly lethal at 800 ppm) and conventional crudes.

That volume is 100 times larger than carried by the train that incinerated the downtown core of Lac-M#233;gantic and took 47 lives.

Densely populated residential areas of Burnaby are 200 metres below the tank farm, three elementary schools (Montecito, Forest Grove and University Highlands) are located nearby, and the only escape routes from Simon Fraser University, just 600 metres above the tank farm, cross just a few meters above where new 200,000 barrel tanks will be constructed.

The danger and risks have been detailed by the Burnaby fire department, consultants, professional engineers and residents of Burnaby. But the National Energy Board, the federal government, the Alberta government, the Alberta oil and gas industry and many Albertans see the risks as "acceptable."

No Albertan would ever consider, let alone approve, any such installation beside the University of Alberta or the University of Calgary and their adjacent residential areas with elementary schools.

In contrast, the Cushing Oklahoma tank farms, known as the Pipeline Crossroads of the World, with capacity to store 94 million barrels of crude oil, are located on flat Oklahoma prairie. They are 1.5 to 5 kilometres from residential areas or schools and are nowhere near a university campus or a large population centre.

The city of Burnaby, population 223,000, is located in the geographic centre of metropolitan Vancouver.

Mindless politics and industrial greed have shamefully undermined common sense and social responsibility.

Mike Priaro, Calgary

As Big Oil celebrates Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's devotion to their cause, Finance Minister Bill Morneau assures us their policy to putrefy the environment for profit will return many, many jobs, while generating huge amounts of money that can be used to save and serve First Nations and, ironically, the environment.

Surely, even more sunny ways await. May Trudeau and his party experience every bit of what they deserve for their services. God's speed to the Greens.

Cavan Gostlin, Oshawa

I used to be a 100 per cent Green party supporter, but last summer we took a train to Winnipeg. That experience has opened my eyes to the bigger picture. I think the Greens are too narrow in their focus.

Our train trip back to Toronto was delayed by nine hours because there were so many trains carrying very long loads of oil train cars. Those trains could not fit on the siding track and got the right of way.

The experience brought back images of the disaster at Lac-M#233;gantic in Quebec several years ago. What would happen to the communities or forests in Ontario if one of those trains had an accident?

I would rather see oil in a pipeline, with careful scrutiny for leaks, rather than the alternative. Some people seem to forget that we need oil for our cars and to cool and heat our homes and buildings. We do not yet have the reality of green energy (wind, solar or ocean currents) and not even the support from the general public.

I find it comforting to know that there are many Indigenous peoples wanting to buy parts of the pipeline to better their economy.

Until we get green alternatives to oil, I prefer to produce it in Canada rather than import it at exorbitant fees. I am fully in support of Ottawa's decision to move ahead.

Lillian Shery, Toronto

According to this article, tax revenues are expected to hit $500 million a year once the expansion is complete.

However, we have already spent $4.5 billion to buy the existing line and the estimated cost of building the new pipeline is $9.3 billion. It would take at least 30 years before the capital is repaid, to say nothing of the interest or opportunity costs entailed. And this is without estimating any drop in demand for the product, which should be virtually phased out by 2050 if the human life on the planet is to survive.

Who could possibly consider this a good financial investment for the people of Canada? Clearly a political decision, and one on the wrong side of history.

G.W. Byron, Toronto

The lawsuit recently launched against the federal government by youth group ENvironnement JEUnesse seems prescient in the wake of the TMX re-approval.

As youth, we stand to lose the most from the emissions enabled by this pipeline, upward of a hundred megaton a year if you count the downstream emissions glibly ignored by the NEB. This is a whole fifth of the 2030 emission

cap Canada committed to under the Paris Agreement, our main tool to hold countries emitting more to their emission reduction commitments.

Nor is the short-term promise of job growth before the carbon bubble inevitably bursts much consolation: those of my peers in engineering at U of T who took jobs in oil and gas did so with almost universal reluctance.

Zhenglin Liu, co-president, University of Toronto Environmental Action

Am I missing something? Did Prime Minister Justin Trudeau just promise to use money from the dirty energy pipeline to fund clean energy?

Orwell could not have done better. It's 1984 in 2019.

Deborah Cook, Toronto

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